

At Sword-Point

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by Anonymous

Summary

Wilbur and Tommy have made it through their first day of school. All they have left to do is to tag along with Techno for his fencing session and follow him home on the bus, sure that the most difficult part of the day was over with and nothing else could possibly go wrong.

~*~

A companion story for Guitar Strings and Keyrings from Wilbur's pov set during chapter 3.

Notes

Okay so I know I said that Guitar Strings was only going to have 3 parts but there's been a few requests for more Wilbur pov oneshots on my Tumblr so here we are XD

This one takes place near the end of Chapter 3 and follows Wilbur's pov for the fencing scene and over the bus ride home. It probably won't make much sense unless you've read the main fic for this series. It is completed and can be found [here](#), or through the [Guitar Strings and Keyrings AU](#) series.

Like the other Wilbur POV oneshot, this isn't a sequel and is instead a companion story for the main fic. It doesn't change anything about the main story and is more like bonus content :)

Please read thorough the tags for this one!! This one isn't as dark as Trust Fall but still contains a lot of themes that have the potential to be upsetting, so please stay safe while reading!!

Anyway, sorry to keep you all waiting and hope you enjoy!! :D

(I am writing with the characters from the Dream SMP, not the content creators behind them. This is entirely a work of fiction and does not reflect them in any way and only serves as my interpretation of their characters. Please don't share this with any ccs. If any one of them mentions that they are uncomfortable with fanworks of this nature I will delete it immediately.)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

“Has he just fucking left us?”

Wilbur looked down. Tommy had huddled close to him, his arms folded across his chest as he shivered, gritting his teeth against the cold late-autumn air.

“I don’t know.”

“What do we do if he has?”

Wilbur had absolutely no idea and he hated that fact more than anything. The signature powerlessness that came with being entirely useless. He had no money, no phone and not a clue which direction ‘home’ even was.

“I don’t know.”

In a worst-case scenario, he could drag Tommy back to the receptionist’s office and hope she was still there to call Phil. Wilbur knew from past experience with the system that nothing good came from inconveniencing foster parents but he couldn’t bear to watch Tommy stand there shivering for much more.

In truth, Wilbur hoped they could go longer without trying their new foster father’s patience but Wilbur figured things might be okay if he shouldered the blame. If he told Phil that *he* was the one who wanted to call him for a lift home and that Tommy had been dragged along without much say in the matter.

It was far from a good plan but Wilbur suspected it was the best he could do given the circumstances.

If the receptionist had gone home already, then Wilbur truly would have to figure something out.

In the past, Wilbur had to deal with the frigid wind and walk home, shivering and trying to keep from losing feeling in his fingers. Phil, however, lived very far out and Wilbur wasn’t sure that they could feasibly walk the distance with the weather so unforgivingly cold – if they could even work out which direction to begin walking in.

Wilbur looked down at the kid again – at his little brother. He felt his heart lurch in his chest.

“Where’s your coat?”

“Hmm?”

“Your coat, Tommy, where is it?”

“Oh,” the kid shrugged and Wilbur saw him curl in on himself more, fingers almost unnervingly pale as he trembled. “I thought I told you a while ago that I lost it.”

“Last house?” Wilbur sighed. He tried to sound annoyed but couldn’t help the note of concern that worked its way into his words.

“Yeah.”

It wasn’t the first time they had been placed in different living arrangements to one another – finding a family willing to take in two kids from the system that weren’t even related by blood was not an easy task.

Wilbur believed his social worker when she told him that she tried to find a home for them both but her efforts were ultimately futile.

Wilbur knew the only real chance he had of staying by Tommy’s side was the group home which was less than ideal for either of them.

The system saw them as friends and Wilbur found the very notion insulting. They were brothers – family – but sentiment rarely played a factor in placements. It was all to do with what was best for the child, even if, ironically, that meant separating them.

Tommy had lasted a full 3 weeks in his previous home. Wilbur was impressed he’d made it that long without being returned to the group home sooner.

When Tommy arrived back, he had scowled and glared at anyone who came near him. He even tried to ignore Wilbur at first, still not quite over his brother’s willingness to let him be dragged away in the first place and while Wilbur insisted it was for the best, Tommy wouldn’t hear it.

He’d broken down later that evening, curling his hands into tight fists that clutched at the fabric of Wilbur’s jumper. Cursing Wilbur for not being there, his social worker for arranging the placement and the family he had been put with for not showing any sympathy at all for a kid who had been separated from his brother and wouldn’t act like a ‘normal’ child.

Wilbur had fought through the tight, squeezing sensation in his throat to tell Tommy that he had missed him. That he had not stopped worrying about him. That he definitely still cared about him more than anything else in the world. But Wilbur knew the group home wasn’t good for them.

Both himself and Tommy were fiercely protective of one another. They had to be in order to look after themselves but in a place where there were so many kids, it was only natural for there to be food shortages, or fights over tiny, trivial things. It was a constant game of survival, of watching your back and Wilbur knew that getting Tommy out was his priority – even if it meant he, himself, got left behind.

Tommy could never understand it that way, though. To him it was always together or not at all and while Wilbur loved the sentimentality, he was a dismally pragmatic person and knew that things rarely worked out that way.

It was why when he’d met Phil back in his social worker’s office that he had never expected for the man to offer to take them both. It wasn’t an idea he’d even been willing to think

about. Getting your hopes up only lead to disappointment and Wilbur had more than enough of that for one lifetime.

It was a chance too good to be true – an opportunity to escape the group home and stay with his little brother.

Wilbur was determined to not let anything go wrong – give Phil no reason to want them gone. Wilbur had thought they'd been doing well, all things considered. The only factor he hadn't accounted for was Phil's adopted son, Techno.

Wilbur wasn't sure if Techno realised just how much influence he had over their situation but it definitely scared him. Phil seemed to care about Techno as much as Techno cared about his Dad, which wouldn't have been a bad thing if Techno didn't completely hate both him and Tommy.

If Techno wanted them gone, Wilbur was sure that all he had to do was ask Phil and the next morning they would be told to pack their things. They wouldn't even have to put a foot out of line and their last chance at staying together would be ripped out from under them through no fault of their own.

It was why Wilbur had to make sure Techno was at least somewhat able to tolerate having them around. He still couldn't quite figure out how to keep the guy happy and Techno had been useless at helping Wilbur figure out what would appease him.

Grimly, Wilbur wondered if he was already too late. If Techno had abandoned them, sealing their fate and leaving Phil one angry phone call away.

Wilbur looked to Tommy, felt his brows knit together in concern as he considered their situation.

God, the kid looked halfway frozen already.

"Here," Wilbur slipped his school bag off his shoulder and shrugged off his coat. He offered it to Tommy who stepped back, and shook his head quickly.

"No," he said firmly. "It's your coat. Keep it."

Wilbur sighed. Tommy could never just accept help when it was handed to him.

"Take it. You're cold."

"I'm not," Tommy said as convincingly as he could, which would fool absolutely no one – let alone Wilbur.

"You are. Stop being a child and just put it on."

"I'm not a child," Tommy insisted, though he seemed quieter, more subdued than when they usually bickered and Wilbur felt something ache inside his chest at the sight. "Besides why would I want to touch your shit, it doesn't even look good on you."

“Tommy, you literally *only* wear my jumpers.”

“No, they are mine.”

“They are like 3 sizes too big for you.”

“They aren’t,” Tommy said insistently, though Wilbur caught the slight pink tint to his cheeks and grinned victoriously. Tommy was very easy to wind up but he was also very easy to embarrass.

“Take the coat and I’ll drop it.”

Tommy seemed to weigh his options before caving and reluctantly reaching for Wilbur’s coat.

“I hate you,” he muttered, pulling his arms through the sleeves and glaring up at Wilbur.

“Let me roll up the sleeves, it looks ridiculous like that.”

Tommy waved him away, which Wilbur had to admit was rather funny with the way the extra length flapped about around his hands. Like this Tommy looked a lot smaller. Much more like a kid his age, rather than someone forced to grow up way too soon.

Wilbur reached out to help him for a second time and Tommy let him adjust the coat.

“How long do we give it before we figure out a plan B?” Tommy asked once Wilbur had finished, burying his hands into the coats pockets in a bid to keep them warm.

“A little longer,” Wilbur told him, rocking up onto his toes to try and see over the crowds of students all making for the buses. “He might not be out yet.”

“He’s taking his time. It’s not like we’re freezing to death out here.”

Wilbur rolled his eyes and tried to seem unfazed but the chill in the air was worse than he realised. Not that he would let on to Tommy. It’d only make him feel more guilty about the coat on his back and that was the last thing Wilbur wanted. Still, it only made him hope that he saw Techno soon before he had to face the notion that he may actually have to brave walking home without an extra layer to keep him warm.

Fortunately, though, it was at that moment that Wilbur caught sight of Techno manoeuvring his way through the crowd of people to get towards them.

Wilbur felt himself sigh with relief as he looked down to Tommy.

“Found him,” he muttered quietly.

The kid perked up at Wilbur’s voice, almost lost to the sounds of others around them chatting and the wind as it howled.

As soon as Techno reached them, Tommy straightened and Wilbur resisted the urge to stand in front of the kid as a buffer.

He had to remind himself that Techno hadn't proven himself to be a physical threat so far and coming across as overly cautious of him, had the potential to offend him.

"C'mon," Techno regarded them gruffly, as if they were an annoyance. "I'm already gonna be late."

Wilbur nodded and made to follow him as Techno walked away towards the back of the school. He made sure to grip Tommy tightly by the arm and drag the kid after him. Getting separated in a crowd was never a good thing, especially when there were certain people around somewhere who would likely be more than enthusiastic about making their lives hell.

Despite Wilbur being taller, Techno moved quickly and didn't seem interested in waiting for them to catch up.

The sports hall itself was spacious, though still much too cramped for Wilbur's liking.

The kids already in the hall were either stood around chatting or practicing in pairs.

There was something about them all being in the same white fencing jackets with large helmets obscuring their faces that left Wilbur thoroughly unsettled.

Wilbur could admit that he knew nothing about fencing but decided almost immediately that he hated it.

He saw several benches pushed against the side of the sports hall and quickly set eyes on an empty one at the far end of the hall. He grabbed Tommy by the arm and made a beeline for it, hoping that if he stuck close enough to the wall, that they could slip past the others unnoticed.

He was sure that the sport itself wouldn't be *too* dangerous – it was being practiced in a school after all – but there was something about the loud clash of metal and rapid, sudden movements that set him on edge.

Luckily though, he and Tommy were not disturbed and made it to the bench without issue.

"Hey," Wilbur heard Tommy hiss quietly. "Let me go. Stop being so..." he frowned, fumbled for the right word. "Jumpy."

Wilbur pushed Tommy down onto the bench and took a seat beside him.

"Sorry if I want us to avoid getting *stabbed*."

"That doesn't mean I can't watch it."

"What?"

"It looks cool!" Tommy said defensively, like he couldn't understand Wilbur's hold-up around kids belonging to a school that hadn't exactly been the most welcoming to them,

wielding swords.

“You are going to get yourself killed,” Wilbur groaned into his hands. “And when you do, it won’t even be my fault.”

Tommy muttered a string of insults under his breath but Wilbur paid him no mind. He was too busy making sure that anyone carrying a weapon stayed the hell away from them.

For all his feigned indifference, Wilbur knew he’d stand directly in the way of someone meaning to do them harm without a second thought. He was used to it. He’d take a hit time and time again as long as it kept his little brother safe.

“Woah,” Tommy leaned in close and said quietly. “Who do you think that is?”

Wilbur looked up and it didn’t take much to realise who had caught Tommy’s attention.

Wilbur suspected the kid was around his age, maybe even slightly older. He seemed popular, stopping to chat with almost everyone there as he made his way across the hall. The realisation that he was heading directly for the vacant end of the room made Wilbur’s blood run cold. It was the space of room directly in front of them and while the guy seemed friendly, Wilbur knew better than to assume that made him a non-threat.

He held himself upright, chin tilted high as he looked out over the sports hall as if there were nowhere else he’d rather be.

Confident *and* popular – a dangerous combination and definitely someone Wilbur knew not to make an enemy of.

“Not someone we should go anywhere near.”

Tommy didn’t seem to like Wilbur’s answer as he sat back with a huff, content to sulk as Wilbur kept an anxious eye on the people around them.

He spotted Techno again and it was with a sinking feeling of dread that he realised that Techno was making his way over to the boy who, not seconds ago, Wilbur had resolved to have absolutely no dealings with whatsoever.

They seemed to be friends, which was a notion that left Wilbur feeling completely helpless. Techno complaining about his annoying foster brothers to one of the popular kids could make their lives so much worse.

Wilbur was used to watching his back but there were terrifying moments when he’d have to leave Tommy to go to class and he would find himself hoping that the kid was alright. That nobody had tried to jump him while he was alone and without Wilbur to act as protector.

Sure enough, Techno was chatting to the kid. They were smiling, getting along and Wilbur could do nothing but sit there and hope Techno wasn’t saying anything too unfavourable about them.

Then, they pulled down their masks and prepared to fight.

They clashed in a blur of white and flash of meal. The two of them were quicker than anyone else Wilbur had seen so far and he hoped the unease on his face wasn't obvious. His heart raced in his chest and he felt the signature kick of adrenaline in his veins. He flexed his fingers, trying to dispel the tingling sensation and instinct to *run, run, run-*

“Hey.”

Wilbur whipped around in his seat to come face-to-face with another boy.

He was still dressed in his school uniform and, thankfully, without a sword. Wilbur suspected he was waiting for one of the others to finish practice and had grown bored, deciding for some godawful reason that it was a good idea to try and make conversation with the new kids.

On instinct, Wilbur nudged Tommy further back, away from the potential threat. He internally berated himself for not seeing the boy approach sooner, that if he had been wanting to hurt them, Wilbur may have lost them their chance to run away before things escalated.

The boy didn't make any sudden movements, though. He merely stood there and smiled politely.

“Hi,” Wilbur replied shakily.

He wanted to look around, as if to make sure the guy had actually meant to talk to him but Wilbur knew better than to take his attention away from the person closest to them.

“Can I sit there?”

The boy pointed to the end of the bench Wilbur and Tommy were sitting on and it took all of Wilbur's control to fight the urge to flinch backwards as the boy's hand came closer.

Wilbur figured he didn't really have much of a choice. He didn't know the guy but saying 'no' had the potential to piss him off and Wilbur knew that they didn't need another enemy at school.

He would also be sat between Tommy and their newest acquaintance, so if anything were to go wrong and the guy wasn't as friendly as he initially appeared, Wilbur would serve as a makeshift shield.

With unease, Wilbur swallowed and nodded his head. He moved over to give the boy room to perch himself on the end of the bench.

“Thanks,” he said. “I'm George.”

“Wilbur,” he gestured to his brother. “This is Tommy.”

George nodded in acknowledgement and sat back, leaning against the wall of the sports hall.

George didn't take much notice of the pairs of people around them, trading hits as they moved back and forth. He almost appeared bored, as if he'd been here before and had grown

tired of the routine. Wilbur figured it could explain the sudden interest in himself and Tommy.

He seemed so normal, Wilbur couldn't help but sneak a glance at him out of the corner of his eye. George hadn't teased them, made any vague threats or interrogated them about what school they had transferred from.

Wilbur was torn between wanting to ask George why he'd wandered over to sit with them and not saying anything that had even the slightest potential to backfire and have the boy turn on them.

Before Wilbur could make his mind up there was a squeak of rubber soles on the sports hall floor followed by a loud metallic bang.

His head shot up to find Techno and his partner still fighting. Their swords had struck together for a moment, then they were back to moving again.

Wilbur let out a quiet sigh of relief, satisfied that both he and Tommy weren't in any immediate danger.

He quickly looked over at Tommy to make sure the loud noise hadn't upset him or brought to the surface some rather unpleasant memories but the kid just sat there, wide-eyed, seemingly awestruck. Wilbur wasn't sure to feel relived or concerned about that fact.

Before he could think too deeply about it, though, he was caught off-guard by the sound of George huffing a laugh.

"They don't half like to show off, do they?"

Wilbur swallowed around the lump in his throat. "Um..."

"Dream and Techno, I mean."

Was it safe to insult Techno, or his friend? Did George know them? Was he just joking, or did he mean it seriously?

Wilbur resisted the urge to groan in frustration. Conversation was a minefield and one wrong answer could land him and Tommy in more trouble than they were in already.

"O-oh, I don't know," he said quietly.

It was a safe answer. A cowardly answer. Wilbur wouldn't be making any friends but he also wouldn't be making any enemies either – he supposed that was the important part.

"I guess you probably wouldn't," George said with a shrug. He didn't seem angry, which brought Wilbur more relief than it probably should have. "You're both new here, right? I saw you come in with Techno so I thought you were friends or something."

It would be so easy to tell George the truth. He seemed nice, someone who wouldn't judge or care about their background and lying to someone who had been nothing but pleasant left a

bad taste in Wilbur's mouth but the alternative wasn't worth the risk.

Techno hadn't said that they were not to associate at school but he had also made it abundantly clear that he wanted nothing to do with the foster kids.

If Wilbur mentioned to George that Phil was fostering himself and Tommy, then would Techno even find out? Wilbur had never heard Techno mention a friend by the name of 'George' but he couldn't be sure.

"Are you friends with Techno?" The question came out with a little more force than Wilbur had intended and he resisted the urge to wince.

Calm down, he told himself. *Don't ruin this*.

"I guess," George shrugged. "He and Dream are pretty close, so we see each other around."

"Dream?"

"That's Dream." George pointed to Techno's sparring partner. "One of my best friends."

Wilbur felt a sudden spike of panic and clenched his hands to stop them from shaking. He took a deep breath and tried to calm his racing heart.

It would mean that George was also in the popular crowd too and Wilbur told himself that he knew better than to associate with anyone like that.

If he said the wrong thing to offend George or his friend, then there would be hordes of people out to make their lives as difficult as possible. They were people with influence, the power to make their time at school tolerable or a waking nightmare.

But in the midst of Wilbur's internal panic, he couldn't help but wonder if the opposite was true too. If he stayed friendly with George then maybe he and Dream would be willing to look out for them from time to time. Maybe if Wilbur asked really nicely, Dream would be willing to scare the people who had been harassing him and Tommy earlier-

"How do you know Techno?" George asked and Wilbur's train of thought derailed. He answered before he could think the situation through.

"We're Phil's new fosters."

Wilbur immediately winced. He couldn't believe he'd just said it – that he hadn't even thought through the consequences and would now have to live with them, whatever they ended up being.

When Wilbur managed to meet George's eyes again, he noticed that the boy seemed concerned. He opened his mouth and then shut it, brows knit together and Wilbur shrank back.

"Are you okay?"

“I-“

“I mean, is Techno being a dick or something?”

“Oh, no he’s fine,” Wilbur said quickly and hoped his voice sounded at least a little reassuring. The last thing he wanted was for George to put in a complaint with his foster brother – that would certainly only exacerbate problems.

“Alright,” George said at last. “But if you want someone to talk to him, you can let us know. Techno’s great but he can be a little, um, difficult to warm up to. First time I saw the guy it was when he was beating the absolute shit out of Dream.”

“He *what*?” Wilbur bolted upright, staring at George in disbelief.

Wilbur could see it coming – could have predicted that the other shoe would drop at some point. Of course he and Tommy ended up in a comfortable house, with a foster father who had treated them well, it was only natural that something *had* to go wrong.

It looked like that something would end up being Techno after all.

Wilbur had been so caught up in the fact that Techno could ask Phil for them to be sent away that he hadn’t even entertained the thought that Techno might just retain his hold over the house by beating them should they push him too far.

Wilbur glanced at Tommy, who still seemed captivated by the fight to be paying their conversation any mind. Wilbur’s heartbeat sounded loud in his own ears. He’d have to keep a closer eye on Tommy. He couldn’t risk the kid saying anything that would push Techno too far – the thought of his younger brother getting hurt was unbearable.

“Yeah they got into a fight a few years ago but it’s all good now.”

Wilbur forced himself to nod, to take in a deep breath and respond despite feeling lightheaded.

“What was it about?”

“The fight?” George said, turning to look at him again. “I can’t remember but it was something really dumb. I think someone told Dream that Techno was accusing him of cheating on one of his papers and was gonna get him in trouble or something - which never happened by the way, but at the time we didn’t know that.” George averted his gaze, laughing slightly as if embarrassed. He brought a hand up to rub the back of his neck. “Dream was pissed though. Me and Sapnap – that’s another one of our friends, you’ll see him around at some point – we literally helped him study for weeks on end so I think all of us were tired and not thinking straight.”

“So Dream went to beat him up?”

“Well, no, Dream went to *talk* to him but Techno isn’t always the easiest person to talk to. One thing lead to another and they got angry and well it just kind of happened.”

Wilbur wasn't quite sure how to respond.

"Oh."

Wilbur suspected that George picked up on the way his face had paled or the tension in his jaw because he was quick to reassure Wilbur that he was fine.

"That was years ago though! They're friends now and Techno got Dream to start fencing so that's good. They've got each other's back in a weird sort of way, Dream doesn't let people talk shit about Techno anymore and Techno's cool with the fact that Dream attacked him that one time."

George's words failed in making him feel any better about the situation. After the end of Techno's session, Wilbur and Tommy would have to go home with him. They would have to live with the knowledge that he was more than capable of throwing a punch – of not only getting involved in fights but apparently winning them too. Not to mention that they fought over something so trivial as a misunderstanding.

It looked apparent to Wilbur that he likely wasn't getting out of this placement without a few bruises at best and at worst...

Wilbur forced himself not to think about it.

"That doesn't sound like something you just get over."

"We were all kids back then, we did loads of stupid things and it's not like Techno was helpless. The guy's insane, in fact now that I think about it, Dream probably came off worse."

Wilbur shuddered, curling in on himself. Sitting in a loud school sports hall wasn't particularly enjoyable but the idea of going home with Techno began to feel absolutely terrifying the more George told him about his past with Dream.

George blinked, taking in Wilbur's painfully transparent fear and he was quick to try and reassure Wilbur before he could feel any more hopeless about his situation.

"I mean, he's fine, seriously! One of the nicest guys I know. He's always helped me with my English homework when I get stuck. Basically, he's okay as long as you don't piss him off."

Well, Wilbur heard his own voice in his head, laced with sarcasm. *That shouldn't be too hard.*

"Right."

George then looked up and over Wilbur's shoulder. "Hey, Techno!"

Wilbur spun around to find his foster brother standing unnervingly close and jolted backward into George. He opened his mouth to apologise but found that he couldn't quite get the words out.

How long had Techno been standing there? How much had he heard? Would he snap as soon as they left the sports hall and strike Wilbur for talking about him behind his back?

When he dared to meet Techno's eyes again, though, he seemed flushed and Wilbur couldn't tell if he was embarrassed or exhausted from fencing.

Either way, he didn't seem angry and that fact alone scared Wilbur more than it reassured him.

"Hullo."

Wilbur saw Techno set a water bottle on the ground near their bench and pull his mask back down over his head. Then, he turned and met Dream in the middle of the hall, they seemed to talk for a moment before both of them assumed their positions once more and began a second round.

Wilbur just stared at them for a moment, still frozen in fear and confusion.

Surely Techno had heard them, he'd only been standing a short distance from their bench. Wilbur couldn't worry about *if* he had overheard their conversation, but how much he had caught and how angry he'd be after he finished fencing with Dream.

Wilbur felt himself tremble and he quickly tightened his hands into fists to hide the fact that they were shaking. He breathed in deep, shallow breaths and looked about him for some sort of distraction.

George had turned his attention back to watching Dream and Techno fight but didn't seem at all interested. Wilbur followed his line of sight and saw Techno and Dream clash in a mix of noise and flash of metal.

Dream was fast but Techno was faster. He pushed Dream back, levelling him with attack after attack, each one more forceful than the last.

Then there was quiet and Wilbur noticed the point of Techno's sword pressing against the white of Dream's jacket, near where his beating heart would be.

Techno had won and Wilbur felt sick.

Distantly, Wilbur heard a sigh from beside him and noticed George checking the time on his phone.

George felt a mile away and while Wilbur knew he could reach out and touch him, the world merged together in a blur of colour and noise.

George stood up and stretched. He took a step towards Techno and Dream but then turned suddenly and Wilbur felt frozen in place. There was something in the way George looked at him that Wilbur couldn't place.

"You know," George said. "If you ever do need help, you can come and find me, okay?"

Wilbur blinked in shock for a moment before he remembered himself and nodded jerkily.

"Um, thanks."

George smiled one last time before he turned again and walked away.

Wilbur wanted to follow him to where Techno had finished fighting but he didn't trust his legs to carry him there.

"Wil," he heard Tommy whisper from beside him. "You okay?"

Wilbur nodded his head despite the motion only making him feel more dizzy. He couldn't pass out. Not here in front of everyone and leave Tommy on his own. It would be beyond cruel and Wilbur knew that Tommy deserved better.

"I'm fine," he replied firmly and wrapped the words up in false confidence, unsure if he was trying to fool himself or Tommy or maybe them both. "Don't worry about me."

Because if he did end up collapsing, the last thing he would want was for Tommy to have to stick around and help him.

"You sure?" Tommy looked him over and Wilbur hated the fact that the kid knew exactly what to search for. The way his hands trembled, the sweat on his brow and nervous way his eyes flitted across the room. "Is the world doing that thing again where everything gets a little, uh, blurry? Loud and stuff?"

Wilbur wanted to laugh. The way Tommy said it – like it was everyone else's fault and not his own. It would have been touching if it didn't remind Wilbur of how truly fragile he was. How it really did take so little to send him reeling.

Techno hadn't even hurt them yet. Tommy was fine. He was sitting right beside him and he was *fine*.

When Techno did finally decide to snap, Wilbur would be ready to step in front of Tommy and shoulder all of his anger. He'd done it before and he would do it again, as many times as he had to.

They had been to countless foster homes already. Wilbur knew the routine by heart and this time was no different.

The second Techno so much as raises a hand against them, Wilbur would have Tommy whisked away, under a bed or curled up at the back of a wardrobe. It wasn't ideal but it would keep him out of harms way until Techno had finished taking his anger out on Wilbur instead.

Tommy wouldn't be happy with him afterwards but Wilbur could handle Tommy's grief as long as it meant that he didn't end up marred with bruises.

He looked over, saw Tommy's eyes, bright and alert and undoubtedly concerned.

Wilbur tried to take a deep breath but he choked on it and tried again.

"A little," he said at last.

"Can I help?" Tommy asked.

“It’s okay. I’m already feeling better.”

Wilbur stood up as if to prove a point and tried not to wince as the harsh light of the sports hall stung his eyes and the sounds of swords clashing rung in his ears. He smiled down at Tommy and hoped it looked convincing.

“Alright,” Tommy said at last. The kid huddled close to him, tucked against his side in case he did end up slightly unsteady when he walked. “Just grab on to me if you get dizzy and shit, okay?”

Wilbur huffed a laugh and made to follow after George with Tommy pressed close beside him. “Okay.”

He focused on breathing as he moved, placing one foot in front of the other and keeping his balance. Wilbur found himself more steady on his feet than he thought he’d be and didn’t stumble once as he followed George.

Wilbur stopped some distance away, leaving enough space in case a sword was swung in their direction. Techno and Dream seemed happy but Wilbur couldn’t help but take precautions anyway and figured that as long as he and Tommy weren’t close enough to be grabbed at and hit, they were relatively safe.

Dream was sprawled out on the floor, panting with an arm thrown over his head.

“Are you done?”

George nudged Dream with his foot and the boy sighed deeply, pulling his arm away from his face to look pleadingly up at George.

“Avenge me, George.”

“If you don’t get up I’ll just drive home without you,” George replied, voice devoid of any sympathy for him.

“You can’t drive.”

“I’ll figure it out.”

Wilbur and Tommy watched from afar as Dream sat up. He reached out for George to pull him to his feet.

Wilbur saw George scowl at him and pointedly fold his arms. “Don’t look at me.”

“*George.*” Dream whined from his place on the floor and then turned to Techno, expectantly.

“I would but you’re all sweaty and that’s kinda gross...”

Dream huffed but didn’t seem too upset.

“You’re both the worst,” he sighed dramatically and got to his feet.

Dream smiled once more at Techno as he turned around and made to leave.

Wilbur had thought he and Tommy had managed to avoid the situation entirely but as Dream moved to pass them by, Wilbur locked eyes with him and saw as Dream tilted his head in intrigue before trying to peer round him at Tommy.

Wilbur kept himself firmly in the way. Dream was a lot more intimidating up close and Wilbur fought the urge to shuffle back even more.

He told himself that he was safe, that George had offered to look out for him. Though Wilbur knew that could all change if Dream's opinion of them was less than favourable. George had been friendly but Wilbur was under no illusion that he and Tommy would come before George's pre-existing friends – especially someone he seemed as close with as Dream.

Wilbur readied himself to run. He shifted onto the balls of his feet and discreetly reached for Tommy's wrist. He knew that Techno wouldn't be happy when he inevitably had to take off after them but Wilbur hoped that when Techno managed to chase him down, the inevitable beating would hurt less than the consequences of making an enemy of the most popular kid in school.

“Oh, hey, I don't think I know you guys. I'm Dream.”

Wilbur nodded curtly, not quite sure where to look.

On one hand, meeting Dream's eyes could be taken as a challenge but looking away would mean dropping his guard.

Wilbur decided to take the risk and, mercifully, Dream did not seem at all upset by the eye contact. Still, Wilbur maintained the space between them, just to be safe.

Tommy, though, had no such reservations about getting involved with people he should be avoiding at all costs. Wilbur noticed the kid shuffle forward and peer out from around him to regard Dream curiously.

“I'm Wilbur and this is Tommy,” he said and hoped the panic he felt wasn't noticeable in the way he spoke.

“It's nice to meet you both.”

Dream sounded genuine and Wilbur looked between him and George. He examined them closely, trying desperately to find some trace of malice but he found none.

Shakily, Wilbur replied. “You too.”

Dream looked at them expectantly for a second, as if he was waiting for something though Wilbur couldn't figure out what it was. Dream seemed on the verge of talking but just shook his head and smiled. It didn't seem at all malicious. Either Dream was better at appearing genuine than most, or Wilbur and Tommy hadn't made too much of a bad impression after all.

Dream gave a small wave to Techno and made for the door with George walking alongside him.

“Bye!” Wilbur turned to see George smile over to them and it felt comforting. “I’ll see you guys around!”

If anyone else had said it, Wilbur would have taken it to be a threat. Usually kids who sought them out didn’t do it to be friendly and at previous schools Wilbur had spent weeks walking Tommy to each of his classes in case those kids made good on their words and had actually planned some kind of ambush.

George, though, seemed genuinely nice – enough for it to feel convincing, which only served to set Wilbur on edge. There were plenty of people in their lives who had looked to be caring at first and neither he or Tommy were strangers to kind people showing their true colours later on.

He could only hope that George was as genuine as he had sounded. It wasn’t very often that Wilbur found someone at a school he could rely on. If they weren’t a friend, then it was safer to assume them an enemy but Wilbur figured that it would be nice to have one less person to worry about.

Wilbur smiled back at George and he hoped it was enough to show how grateful he was but then he and Dream were out the door and Wilbur wasn’t even sure where to find them again if he somehow worked up the confidence to try.

Before he could think too hard about it, though, he saw Techno shift out of the corner of his eye and Wilbur immediately tensed.

He figured that with George and Dream gone, Techno wouldn’t hold back.

Wilbur suspected that he wouldn’t exactly approve of his foster siblings prying into his past and while Wilbur wasn’t sure exactly how much Techno had heard, it was likely enough to piss him off and Wilbur had been around enough foster siblings to know what happened as a result of that.

He waited for Techno’s inevitable growl of frustration and for a fist to be swung at his jaw.

Wilbur held still. Best to let him get it over with and hope that Phil wouldn’t ask too many questions when they got home – providing Techno would still show them the way home.

In hindsight, maybe asking other students about his foster brother’s troubled past, while both he and Tommy were reliant on him, wasn’t Wilbur’s smartest move.

The dread from earlier returned tenfold and so did the fear of being left behind.

Dream has a car, Wilbur thought to himself and then quickly dismissed the idea.

It was ridiculous but Wilbur couldn’t help but cling to it anyway.

If Techno decided to abandon them, Wilbur might be able to beg Dream for a lift home. It'd save Tommy from having to endure the weather and George had said that they could come to him if they ever needed help.

If Wilbur grabbed Tommy and ran, then they might be able to catch up with them before they leave.

It was an awful idea but as the seconds passed, Wilbur felt the urge to *run*-

“Ready to go home?”

He turned sharply and locked eyes on Techno.

He didn't seem angry. Not that Techno looked particularly happy, either, but he didn't look seconds away from beating Wilbur to a pulp and that fact alone threw him for a loop.

“Yeah, sure if you are,” Wilbur said when he could force the words out of his throat. He nodded quickly, honestly thankful to be given the chance to step away from the noise and kids wielding swords.

Even when they had left the crowded sports hall, Techno didn't turn on them.

Wilbur had expected to find himself thrown against a locker with a hand curled tight around his throat to hold him as he struggled for air, a warning to stay out of his business spat out through gritted teeth, but Techno just left them alone. In fact, he seemed to be quite happy to pretend they weren't even there at all.

He merely made his way to the changing rooms without another word and left Wilbur and Tommy to themselves.

“That was weird, right?” Tommy said and looked to him in confusion. In the empty corridors, the kid's voice seemed to echo and Wilbur caught himself before he could tell the kid to be quiet. They were alone. They were safe.

“I-“ Wilbur swallowed. “Which part?”

“Well, all of it was *quite* weird, I guess.”

Wilbur hummed.

“I mean, Techno not being angry with us doesn't seem right.”

Wilbur was hit with the exact same thought but the fact that Tommy had brought it up only served to reaffirm his unease. Wilbur knew he was overprotective – that he sometimes saw threats where there were none but if Tommy had picked up on the feeling too, then Wilbur figured his concern was justified.

“Yeah,” Wilbur nodded in agreement. “I have no idea what he's thinking. He could even be angry but is just good at hiding it-“

“Or biding his time,” Tommy added in his best impression of his older brother.

Wilbur huffed a laugh and continued. “Right, so make sure to stay behind me, okay? Make sure you keep quiet and stay out of his reach. I’ll handle it if he gets violent.”

Tommy rolled his eyes and Wilbur expected him to protest but the kid seemed to pick up on the edge to Wilbur’s voice. Something hard and uncompromising that left no room for negotiation.

“Fine,” Tommy said at last and Wilbur let himself smile reassuringly.

They’d be okay. Wilbur would make *sure* they would be okay.

They stood together in silence as Tommy fidgeted. He rocked back and forth on his feet and toyed with the buttons on Wilbur’s coat, all the while sneaking glances at his older brother out of the corner of his eye.

“What?” Wilbur asked eventually, when it became clear that Tommy was clearly waiting for some kind of prompt.

“Nothing, really,” the tone of his voice was light, almost unconcerned but Tommy couldn’t keep still as he spoke. “Just that I reckon I’d be good at fencing.”

“No,” Wilbur said firmly.

“I could be,” the kid muttered defensively, folding his arms.

“*No*,” Wilbur insisted. “There is no way I’m letting you anywhere near there again.”

“Why not? It can’t be that dangerous, they’re doing it in a school-“

“Did you see the way they moved?” Wilbur looked to Tommy as if he was missing something very obvious. “You’ll get hurt.”

“Not if I was any good.”

“Which you aren’t.”

“You don’t know that.”

“You’ve never held a sword in your life!”

“I’ve held a knife, that’s almost the same thing.”

“In no way is that the same thing,” Wilbur shook his head. “Also, I’m not letting you near knives either,” he added as an afterthought.

“Even in self-defence?” Tommy asked teasingly.

Wilbur snorted, his shoulders bouncing as he laughed.

“Not when-“ Wilbur cut himself off.

“What?”

“Shh, Techno’s back.”

Tommy quietened down as Wilbur stood near the door to the changing rooms. He heard the sound of bags being zipped and footsteps, drawing closer and becoming louder and louder. He shot one last look to Tommy and gestured for the kid to back up a little more, just in case Techno’s mood had changed and he met them with the intent to hurt.

Though, even as Techno passed them by, he barely spared them a glance and continued on his way to the bus stop.

As they stepped outside, Wilbur felt the wind, cold and relentless as he wrapped his arms around himself. The sports hall hadn’t been particularly warm but it had kept them away from the elements and Wilbur hadn’t realised quite how much he missed it until he was met with the biting air.

He straightened, and tried to appear unfazed. Tommy would only feel guilty if he saw Wilbur shivering while the kid had his brother’s coat on his shoulders.

As they approached the bus stop, Wilbur noticed small groups of kids lingering nearby and felt his heart beat quicken.

He looked over his shoulder to Tommy and found the kid glaring at anyone who so much as glanced in their direction.

“Come on,” Wilbur said to him urgently, under his breath as to not let Techno hear. Tommy rushed to catch up and huddle closer to Wilbur, tense and on edge as they walked half a step behind Techno.

“Are they here?” Wilbur heard Tommy whisper to him with obvious fear in his voice.

“I’m not sure,” Wilbur brought a hand up to rest on Tommy’s shoulder, pushing the kid slightly in front of himself and guiding him as they walked. “I don’t see them.”

Tommy nodded but didn’t say anything else. Wilbur just heard the kid swallow loudly and duck his head as if to avoid being seen.

Wilbur’s eyes flitted over the crowds of students, desperately searching for the face of the kids who had harassed them earlier in the morning.

They’d singled him and Tommy out after they’d been handed their timetables and were trying to figure out how to navigate the school corridors.

Wilbur had been made a target first. He was tall and quite obviously lost and confused. He was used to insults being hurled his way but as soon as they noticed Tommy’s mounting anger they quickly shifted their attention to the kid.

Wilbur could remember one boy in particular that started walking towards Tommy, muttering darkly about all the ways he'd make the kid suffer for getting involved in matters that didn't concern him.

Wilbur reacted immediately. He forced himself in front of Tommy who stumbled back, face pale and trembling.

The boy grinned, seemingly delighted by the flash of rage in Wilbur's eyes as he squared up and while Wilbur had planned to just endure whatever beating they had intended for Tommy, a part of him really, *really* wanted to curl his hand into a fist and swing at the kid's jaw.

But before Wilbur could work up the nerve, the school bell rang out and the corridors began to fill with students. Wilbur felt himself being drawn into the crowd and took advantage of the opportunity to slip away.

He grabbed at Tommy and glanced back over his shoulder to make sure they weren't being followed.

They'd made it away unscathed but thoroughly shaken and Wilbur knew better than to think the ordeal was over.

Fortunately, though, they didn't have to linger outside and find out as Techno didn't hesitate in walking straight onto one of the waiting buses.

Wilbur pushed Tommy on ahead of himself and then fished the rest of the money Phil had given them out of his pocket as he fumbled for the right change.

As Wilbur paid their bus fare, Tommy looked over the empty seats and set about picking out two together for himself and Wilbur. Techno, though, seemed to have other plans and ushered them to the back of the bus. Wilbur went without much fuss but Tommy yelled in protest.

Once at the rear of the bus, Techno turned to them.

"This is the bus you'll take most days. If it's not at this bus stop, don't get on – it won't take you home. On the days where this bus isn't at this specific stop, get on the one that's in its place."

"What if—" Wilbur quickly cut himself off clamped his mouth shut, as if thinking better of asking questions.

"What if what?"

"What if we get on the wrong one?" Wilbur finished quietly, looking at Techno's shoulder instead of meeting his eyes.

"Then you call Phil. I mean, you *could* get on it if you wanted to but it's like a 30 minute walk and Phil can just pick you up on his way home from work."

Wilbur couldn't help but blink at Techno.

Neither he or Tommy owned phones but he figured that either Techno knew that and decided it wasn't his problem, or he really didn't care.

"You got all that?"

"Yeah, I think so."

"Good," Techno said and it sounded final.

He then shifted to the far side of the bus and slipped a book from his bag. He opened it and sat with his head bowed as his eyes followed the words on the page, completely happy to ignore Wilbur and Tommy the rest of the way home.

Wilbur, however, saw it as something of a relief that he and Tommy would likely go unbothered if only for a short while. He shuffled to the opposite side and let Tommy take the window seat as he sat next to him.

"He's such a dick," Tommy leaned in close and whispered to him.

"*Tommy*," Wilbur cautioned.

"What?" Tommy frowned and muttered quietly. "He is."

"And he's sitting right there. He'll hear you if you're not careful."

Tommy rolled his eyes but let the matter drop. He sat back in his seat and watched from afar as the bus began to fill with people.

Various students filed onboard and the seats in front of them quickly filled up. Amongst the faces, though, Wilbur saw one that made his blood run cold.

"*Wilbur*-" Tommy looked over at him, eyes wide with worry.

It was the boy from earlier and Wilbur recognised a few of the people he was with. Wilbur was struck with the sudden urge to hide but as soon as he thought to duck his head, the boy looked over and made eye contact. He grinned Wilbur fought the urge to flinch.

"It's okay," Wilbur said under his breath, only loud enough so that Tommy could hear him but he didn't take his eyes off the boy as he approached.

Tommy would be okay. Wilbur would make sure of that but he wasn't quite certain how it would end for himself. They were on a bus. They were trapped, with nowhere to go.

Wilbur's eyes landed on the doors to the bus. They were still open and he wondered if it would be worth it to send Tommy running for them.

He could act as a distraction to buy the kid some time to get away but the thought of leaving Tommy out in the cold until he could get home and beg Phil to rescue him felt too cruel.

Wilbur pushed away the idea immediately. Abandoning Tommy in a school car park without anyone there to protect him wasn't even an idea worth considering.

Wilbur looked around again. There was nowhere for Tommy to run or hide and Wilbur was hit with a quickly mounting sense of despair.

"It's okay," Wilbur said again and his voice broke.

Tommy seemed to pick up his brother's lack of conviction and he realised quite how desperate their situation was.

Wilbur sat up straighter and felt Tommy's hands cling to the back of his blazer in silent desperation.

The boy made his way closer and Wilbur was left without any other options than to face the threat head-on. He snarled and shifted back further so Tommy was forced against the window, shielded by his body.

The kid was undeterred. He seemed almost pleased with the obvious fear in their eyes and Wilbur felt his heart race in a dizzying mixture of anticipation and fear.

He heard Tommy's breathing stutter from behind him and Wilbur braced himself, body tense and thrumming with adrenaline.

Wilbur felt eyes on him and he risked looking away for a moment to find Techno watching them intently. He set his book down and Wilbur felt his heart plummet.

Of course, the kids who'd spent the day harassing them would be friends with their foster brother who already hated them. Wilbur should have known that hoping to get home unscathed was too good to be true. All the kids would have to do was ask and Wilbur was sure Techno would be happy to help them out by flooring him with a swift punch to the gut.

He found himself cursing the fact that they had ended up under the same roof as one of the most renowned fighters in the school. That the price for him and Tommy staying together would inevitably be another broken nose or split lip.

Wilbur could only hope that he could keep their attention off of Tommy until someone came alone to break up the fight but nobody around them seemed to even look in their direction.

Wilbur held his breath and waited for the inevitable.

But Techno didn't get up. He only moved to fold his arms and fix the group of kids with a hard, unwavering stare and when he spoke, it was with an obvious note of irritation – almost like challenge. "What?"

The boy turned to Techno and Wilbur saw him frown in annoyance. They stared at each other for a moment and the tension between them was palpable.

Wilbur tried not to feel hopeful about the fact that the two of them didn't seem on good terms.

It meant that Techno likely wouldn't get involved with the beating Wilbur was sure would follow but that didn't mean he'd be interested in stopping it, either.

Techno could still throw them to the wolves – in fact it was almost certain that he would.

After all, he wanted nothing to do with Wilbur and Tommy and while he seemed to have some strange aversion to hurting them personally, he had made it very clear that they were not his personal responsibility and would have to fend for themselves.

“We're looking for a seat, can we take the space next to you?”

Wilbur felt his breath catch in his throat as his heart hammered inside his chest.

He wanted to plead with Techno, to beg for him to help them just this once. That he and Tommy would stay out of his way, and do their best not to cause him trouble but Wilbur knew that Techno had no reason to help them. He didn't even like them and even with Tommy behind him, Wilbur felt very alone.

He sat there feeling helpless and at the mercy of someone who so clearly hated him.

Techno looked at the space between them and Wilbur breathed in a shaky breath. He heard Tommy whimper and as much as he wanted to turn and reassure his brother, he knew better than to let his guard down even for a second.

All Wilbur could do was glare at the kid in a futile attempt to seem stronger than he was and hope against all odds that it was enough to spare him and Tommy.

“No,” Techno said at last and Wilbur blinked at him in disbelief.

He looked from to Techno to the group of kids and waited.

It seemed as though Techno's reputation had saved them, though it felt too good to be true.

Even more importantly, though, Wilbur couldn't figure out why he'd intervened at all.

Either way, it didn't matter why Techno had chosen to help them, only that it meant he and Tommy went unhurt.

Wilbur looked over to Techno and found that he'd already returned his attention to his book.

“Thank you,” Wilbur said quietly, though the words came out embarrassingly shaky.

If Techno heard him, then he made no indication of it and before Wilbur could think too hard about it the bus shunted and began to move.

End Notes

Sorry these take a little while to get out! I'm still working on them but classes take up so much time. Anyway, hope you enjoyed this one and thank you all so much for following this series and taking the time to read my fics, it really does mean so much to me!!

(Here is my [Tumblr](#) in case you want to follow my work :D)

Upcoming fics:

- Collection of guitar moments from Wilbur's pov
- Meeting Techno and Phil for the first time and car ride home from Wilbur's pov
- Guitar Strings and Keyrings epilogue (Techno's pov)
- Separate Pirate AU *should* be updated every Friday but don't hold me to that XD

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!